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MLK Celebration: The Fierce Urgency of Now

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Dorothy Cotton

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Authors

Baruch Whitehead, Janet Galván, Lawrence Doebler, Jeffery Meyer, Dorothy Cotton, Ithaca College Chorus, Ithaca College Choir, and Ithaca College Chamber Orchestra



ITHACA COLLEGE SCHOOL OF MUSIC

ANNUAL MLK CELEBRATION PRESENTS

"THE FIERCE URGENCY OF NOW"

GUEST SPEAKER
CIVIL RIGHTS LEGEND
DOROTHY COTTON
OF ITHACA, NY

MONDAY, JANUARY 24TH
7:30 PM FORD HALL
STUDENT CHAMBER ORCHESTRA,
CHOIR & CHORUS

FEATURED FACULTY INCLUDE:
DIANE BIRR
CHARIS DIMARAS
NATHAN HESS
SUSAN WATERBURY
JOHN WHITE

DIRECTED BY:
BARUCH WHITEHEAD & JANET GALVÁN

ITHACA
SCHOOL OF MUSIC

Martin Luther King Celebration

Eyes on the Prize (Hold On)

Traditional

John White, piano*

Martin Luther King Speech

Agnus Dei

Robert Ray

from Gospel Mass

Ithaca College Chorus

Stephen Wilkins, baritone, Vocal Performance 2012

Josh Condon, pianist

Janet Galván, conductor*

Incantation and Dance

William Grant Still

Candace Crawford, oboe, Performance and Music Education 2013

Diane Birr, pianist*

Total Praise

Richard Smallwood

Amani Singers

Dana Butler, director

I Wanna Be Ready

Traditional Spiritual

arr. Rosephanye Powell

Ithaca College Chorus

Ana Strachan, soprano, Vocal Performance 2012

Josh Condon, pianist

Janet Galván, conductor*

Summerland

William Grant Still

Lin Georgis, cello, Performance and Music Education 2013, MLK Scholar

Nathan Hess, pianist*

Deep River

William Dawson

Ithaca College Choir

Lawrence Doeblér, conductor*

Kreutzer Sonata

Ludwig van Beethoven

Movement 1

Dedicated to Afro-Polish violin virtuoso, George Bridgetower

Susan Waterbury, violin*

Charis Dimaris, piano*

Martin Luther King, Jr. Quotation Speakers

Ithaca College MLK Scholars

Jessica Askew, Drama 2011

Aryelle Cormier, TVR, International Communications 2013

Courtney Ferguson, Politics 2013

Lawrence Moten, Theater Productions Arts 2012

Deanalis Resto, Musical Theater 2011

Video Introduction by Tavis Smiley, PBS

Reflections

Dr. Dorothy Cotton

We Shall Overcome

Traditional

John White, piano*

Baruch Whitehead, conductor*

After piano solo, audience please join in singing

Lift Every Voice and Sing

J. Rosamond Johnson

arr. Roland M. Carter

Ithaca College Chorus

Janet Galván, conductor*

Ithaca College Choir,

Lawrence Doebler, conductor*

Ithaca College Chamber Orchestra

Jeffrey Meyer, conductor*

Hallelujah

arr. Mervyn Warren,

Michael O. Jackson and Mark Kibble

Choral arrangement by Teena Chin

from "Handel's Messiah: A Soulful Celebration"

Ithaca College Chorus

*Ithaca College Faculty

We Shall Overcome

We shall overcome, we shall overcome,
We shall overcome someday
Oh, deep in my heart, I do believe
We shall overcome someday

We'll walk hand in hand...

We shall live in peace...

We are not afraid, we are not afraid
We are not afraid today
Yes, deep in my heart, I do believe
We shall overcome someday.

Program Notes

"Eyes on the Prize (Hold On)"

This song is based on the spiritual "Hold On" (sometimes called "Gospel Plow," exact origins unknown). The lyrics, alluding to many Biblical passages, speak of transcending oppression and persevering despite any struggle or obstacles that may arise in one's path ("Got my hands on the gospel plow, Wouldn't take nothin' for my journey now; Keep your hands on that plow, hold on"). From *Sing For Freedom: The Story of the Civil Rights Movement Through its Songs* (1990):

This is a song that has been through every chapter of the civil rights movement. The words "keep your eyes on the prize" (replacing the more common "keep your hand on the plow") came from Alice Wine, one of the first proud products of voter education schools—on Johns Island, South Carolina, in 1956. The song had meaning for the sit-in students who were the first to be "bound in jail" for long periods of time ["Paul and Silas, bound in jail, had no money for to go to their bail; Keep your eyes on the prize, hold on"]. It went with the Freedom Riders to Jackson and into Parchman, and on to Albany and all of the many other areas of struggle.

Several well-known artists have recorded versions of this civil rights anthem, including Mahalia Jackson, Mavis Staples, Pete Seeger, Bob Dylan, and Bruce Springsteen. The noted 1987 PBS documentary series about the civil rights movement, *Eyes on the Prize*, was named for the song.

William Grant Still

Long known as the "Dean of American Negro Composers," as well as one of America's foremost composers, William Grant Still had the distinction of becoming a legend in his own lifetime. On May 11, 1895, he was born in Woodville (Wilkinson County) Mississippi, to parents who were teachers and musicians. They were of African, Indian, Spanish, Irish, and Scottish heritage. When William was only a few months old, his father died and his mother took him to Little Rock, Arkansas, where she taught English in the high school. There his musical education began--with violin lessons from a private teacher, and later, with inspiration from the Red Seal operatic recordings bought for him by his stepfather.

At Wilberforce University, he took courses leading to a B.S. degree, but spent most of his time conducting the band, learning to play various instruments and making his initial attempts to compose and to orchestrate. His subsequent studies at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music were financed at first by a legacy from his father, and later by a scholarship established just for him by the faculty.

Still was the first Afro-American in the United States to have a symphony performed by a major symphony orchestra. In 1936, he was the first to conduct a major symphony orchestra in the United States when he directed the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra in his compositions at the Hollywood Bowl. He was the first Afro-American to conduct a major symphony orchestra in the Deep South in 1955, when he directed the New Orleans Philharmonic at Southern University. He was the first of his race to conduct a White radio orchestra in New York City, and was the first to have an opera produced by a major company in the United States, when in 1949, his *Troubled Island* was done at the City Center of Music and Drama in New York City. He was also the first to have an opera televised over a national network. With these firsts, Still was a pioneer, but, in a larger sense, he pioneered because he was able to create music capable of interesting the greatest conductors of the day: truly serious music, but with a definite American flavor.

Kreutzer Sonata

George Bridgetower was one of the very few men of color to have broken into European art circles, albeit not solely on the basis of his considerable talent. Although his mother was Polish and his father West Indian, he was billed as an African prince.

Beethoven met and was drawn to Bridgetower shortly after the violinist's arrival in Vienna in March 1803. For his Vienna debut on May 24, Bridgetower commissioned a new sonata from Beethoven, who would play the piano part.

It's tempting to speculate that Beethoven seized upon his partner's outsider status to craft a suitably exotic and genre-stretching piece. Yet, sketches for the first movement are found in his prior notebooks and the finale had been written a year earlier for his sixth sonata, but was then rejected as too brilliant. The rest was barely done in time – the violin part of the first movement was copied just in time for the concert. Bridgetower had to read the *Andante* from Beethoven's own messy manuscript, and Beethoven largely extemporized all but the finale from sketches. Beethoven initially dedicated the sonata to George Bridgetower.

Biographies

Dr. Dorothy Cotton

In recent weeks we have heard a lot about Dr. Martin Luther King. We heard and hear a lot less about the persons surrounding him, without whom the impact and success of the civil rights movement would be unthinkable. One of these people is Dorothy Cotton.

Born in Goldsboro, North Carolina, Dorothy Cotton attended Dillard High School. She was a student at Shaw University in Raleigh, North Carolina, and transferred after one year to Virginia State College in Petersburg, Virginia where she studied English and Library Science. She received her Master's Degree in Special Education and Speech Therapy from Boston University. Dr. Cotton was the Education Director for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference for twelve years working directly with Dr. King and preparing many of what he called "the ground crew" in various areas. Working closely with Dr. King, Dorothy served on his executive staff and was part of his entourage to Oslo, Norway, where he received the Nobel Peace Prize. She served as the Vice President of Field Operations for the Dr.

M.L.K. Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change in Atlanta. She translates years of experience and learning in words and song bearing messages of hope. Through “Songs of the Movement,” laughter, and storytelling, Dorothy synthesizes the lessons from our history into a hardworking vision for the future. Dorothy gets us to laugh, sing, and join together to create a more caring and humane world. She is an educator, a speaker, singer, peacemaker, and a visionary.

What was Dr. Cotton’s motivation? Being African American herself, she understood the context of racial issues. After all, she had grown up in it. It was a time when the whole world was changing. World War II was just over. In the war, African Americans and white Americans had fought side by side. However, once back on American territory, they could not walk through the same front door of an eating establishment, use public facilities, or even try on clothes before buying them in many stores. There emerged a powerful awareness of the gross injustice of such a system. African Americans could die in wars alongside whites, but not live alongside them. Television and visual broadcasting gained ground. Many people were deciding to fight against this exclusion. Fighting against discrimination in her hometown, and meeting Dr. King when he came to speak there, Dorothy accepted the invitation to join his team in Atlanta, Georgia.

Dr. King’s organization was the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Moving to Atlanta to work with him, Dorothy quickly became the Director of Education. The powerful central thesis of the

“...education work was the knowledge that in order to change society, in order to change the system, African Americans first had to change themselves; had to change the way they saw themselves. They needed to discover that they did not have to live as victims of an oppressive system; that they had the power to change this system.”

Thus the main training program became the Citizenship Education Program (CEP). Dorothy led this program planning 5-day residential training sessions for several years. This citizenship training has been called the best-kept secret of the Civil Rights Movement. It has been touted as the most important effort for their rights as citizens. Dorothy Cotton, the educator and visionary, led this most important and basic program.

A powerful, motivating speaker, teacher, and workshop facilitator, Dr. Cotton often uses “Songs of the Movement” to help her tell the story of America’s struggle for civil rights. She has traveled throughout the world, including visits to the former Soviet Union, The People’s Republic of China, Switzerland, Africa, India, Vietnam,

and Europe while participating in international workshops and discussions on a broad range of current social and humanitarian issues.

Music was important in the Civil Rights Movement. She has taught America, and many other places, the songs of the Civil Rights Movement, including “We Shall Overcome.” This theme song of the movement has gone down in history, but it is not the only one. “We Shall Overcome,” is a song that needs to be understood if one is to stay faithful to its origin. It can be sung triumphantly, it can be sung prayerfully. Whether sung prayerfully or in the spirit of triumph, it should be sung with hope and determination of victory, of achieving positive goals. This song emerged against oppression. It came out of suffering! Dorothy reminds us that “We Shall Overcome” was – and should remain – a sacred song, a prayer song. It can be sung with joy and great anticipation, and always hope. “We Shall Overcome” is hope made flesh. This is what Dorothy stands for and what she speaks for today. Her witness about yesterday preserves the lessons from earlier times and shares hope for our challenges today. We need to learn what we can from the journey of Martin Luther King, Jr. and find our own strength and our own vision for how each of us can serve in our own way.

Among the many honors received for her public work, Dr. Cotton was awarded an Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters at the University of New England in 1982, at which time she gave the commencement address. On May 16th, 1999, Dr. Cotton received the Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters from Spellman College in Atlanta, Georgia. Also in 1999, she received the Honorary Doctorate Degree from the University of New Rochelle, where she also delivered the commencement address.

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